



## **MESSAGE FOR U.S. CITIZENS**

**U.S. Embassy, Manila, The Philippines**

**May 20, 2014**

*THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IS TRANSMITTING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION THROUGH THE EMBASSY WARDEN SYSTEM AS A PUBLIC SERVICE TO AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES. PLEASE DISSEMINATE THIS MESSAGE TO ALL U.S. CITIZENS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION OR NEIGHBORHOOD.*

### **Updated Philippine Travel Warning**

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to the Philippines, in particular to the Sulu Archipelago, the island of Mindanao, and in the southern Sulu Sea area. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning dated January 10, 2014, and reflects continuing threats in those areas due to terrorist and insurgent activities. This warning replaces the previous travel warning dated January 14, 2014.

U.S. citizens should continue to defer non-essential travel to the Sulu Archipelago, due to the high threat of kidnapping of international travelers and violence linked to insurgency and terrorism there.

Over the past nine months, there have been kidnappings and attempted kidnappings of foreigners in the Eastern Sabah province of Malaysia and in the southern Sulu Sea area by terrorist or insurgent groups based in the Sulu Archipelago of the Philippines. U.S. citizens should exercise extreme caution if considering travel in the southern Sulu Sea region between Balabac Island and Palawan, in the Philippines; Sabah, Malaysia; and east to Zamboanga City, Mindanao, in the Philippines.

U.S. citizens should continue to exercise extreme caution if traveling to the island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines. In 2013, separatist and terrorist groups increased the tempo and scale of their activities and confrontations with Philippine security forces, with increased bombings, attacks on civilians and political leaders, and battles with security forces. In September 2013, elements of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) occupied portions of the city of Zamboanga and engaged in a lengthy battle with security forces which reduced large parts of the city to rubble. The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) remain active in the Cotabato City area, and in the Maguindanao, North Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat

provinces, where the government maintains a state of emergency and a greater police presence.

The Embassy has imposed a strict restriction on all but the most essential travel to Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, and Embassy employees must receive special authorization from Embassy security officials to travel to any location in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, including urban centers.

U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in the Philippines should review the Department of State's [Country Specific Information for the Philippines](#), which contains additional information about conditions throughout the country.

The Department of State remains concerned about the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. The Department's current message recommending [Worldwide Caution](#) reminds U.S. citizens that terrorism can occur anywhere.

We encourage all U.S. citizens in the Philippines to enroll with the Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) or at the U.S. Embassy in Manila. By enrolling, you can receive the Embassy's most recent security and safety updates during your trip. Enrolling also ensures that we can reach you, or your designated emergency points of contact, during an emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, tel. 63-2-301-2000. The American Citizens Services (ACS) section's fax number is 63-2-301-2017, and you may reach the ACS Section by email at [ACSInfoManila@state.gov](mailto:ACSInfoManila@state.gov). The [ACS Section's website](#) includes consular information and the most recent messages to the U.S. citizen community in the Philippines.

U.S. citizens traveling in the region are encouraged to stay up to date on conditions across the globe by bookmarking the [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#), which contains the current [Travel Warnings](#) and [Travel Alerts](#) as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and become a fan of the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on [Facebook](#) as well. If you don't have internet access, current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States, or for callers from other countries, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

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The Embassy is located at 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines and is open 0730-1600, Monday through Friday. The Embassy's main telephone number is (+632) 301-2000. U.S. citizens can dial this number and ask to be connected to the American Citizen Services (ACS) unit or with the Embassy Duty Officer (for calls outside of normal business hours). You can also contact the ACS unit through email at [ACSInfoManila@state.gov](mailto:ACSInfoManila@state.gov) or through the [Embassy Facebook page](#). Please visit [our website](#) for information on all services offered by the ACS unit.

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in the Philippines enroll in the [Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) at [www.Travel.State.Gov](http://www.Travel.State.Gov). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the State [Department's website](#), where you can find current [Travel Warnings](#), including the [Travel Warning for the Philippines](#), Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the [Country Specific Information for the Philippines](#). For additional information, refer to ["A Safe Trip Abroad"](#) on the State Department's website.

Contact the U.S. embassy or consulate for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), and download our free [Smart Traveler iPhone App](#) to have travel information at your fingertips.